

PATHFINDER REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT ANNUAL REPORT 2013

The Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School District Committee presents this report to the citizens of the District. Currently the Committee consists of 11 members: two members each from Belchertown and Palmer and one each from the remaining towns. In June, the New Braintree Board of Selectmen appointed Stacie Pride to serve until the next state election as a result of the town's not having a candidate in 2012. Michael Cavanaugh and David Droz, both of Palmer, will continue as chairman and vice-chairman, respectively. Lorraine Alves will serve as secretary.

CURRICULUM

Pathfinder students have continued to demonstrate improvement in their performance and achievement on the MCAS tests. The percentage of Pathfinder students scoring in the Advanced and Proficient categories in all 3 areas—English, Mathematics, and Science-- has shown steady progress over the past four years. The percentage of students scoring in the Advanced and Proficient range in English has risen from 81% in 2012 to 83% in 2013. 69% of students scored Proficient or higher in Mathematics, and Science scores increased from 62% to 71% in 2013. Although progress was made in all of these areas, scores in certain subgroups—particularly students with special needs—did not meet expectations of the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. Consequently the Department has classified Pathfinder as a “Level 3” school. Anticipating this designation, the administration has enlisted the assistance of Department personnel to recommend strategies for improvement and to provide the relevant training. These initiatives will continue throughout the 2013-14 school year and beyond.

Pathfinder continued to make progress in its effort to increase the rigor of the academic offerings for students and to make advancements in the vocational offerings as well. The school has fully implemented the Common Core State Standards in all academic areas beginning with the class of 2017. This alignment included adding World History for all incoming 9th graders and rescheduling the school day to include 6 periods. The program of studies now includes new offerings in physical education to include wellness education and personal fitness. Finally, Hospitality Management has been added to our technical program of studies as a 15th program and was approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in late August 2013.

MUNICIPAL AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS:

Collision Repair Technology:

Three Rivers Water and Sewer Dept.: Students completed two utility body doors with blue metallic/clear coat to match their existing paint scheme on one of their department trucks.

Belchertown Fire Dept.: Students repaired and refinished a 2005 Chevrolet Trailblazer. This included changing the color from white to red with a black roof to match the rest of their fleet.

Palmer Police Dept.: Students repaired and refinished a Military Humvee to traditional black and white police colors. This involved refinishing the metal body and the fabric doors. A second Humvee vehicle is currently in progress and will be similarly painted.

Machine Technology:

Students machined several cribbage boards as donations to fundraisers for non-profit organizations. Recipients included:

Palmer Public Library
Top Floor Learning, Palmer
Machine Technology Poker Run, Pathfinder
Pathfinder Car Show (Skills USA)
Monson Free Library - Holiday Raffle

Cosmetology:

Cosmetology students continued their annual visits to area Senior Centers during which they provide "Spa Days" for seniors. The services they offer include manicures, pedicures, facials, and hair styles. Currently the cosmetology students provide these services in Palmer, Ware, Monson and Belchertown.

Carpentry:

Students completed the construction of a new Sally Port at the Granby Police Station.

Students began work on a reception/entrance area for the new Granby Library.

Automotive Reconditioning:

Auto Reconditioning students continued to provide services for police, highway, fire and water districts.

Electrical:

Electrical students completed the lighting, power and security wiring for a new Sally Port at the Granby Police Station

Electrical students completed numerous jobs at Pathfinder including new gym lighting, emergency panel for IT services, installation of several machines in the Machine Shop, Cosmetology electrical upgrades, Auto body Shop upgrades, Culinary Shop upgrades and many other projects.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Thirty-three students participated in the school's Cooperative Education Program which provides opportunities for paid, career-related jobs *in lieu of* attending their vocational classes. In this real work environment, the students enhanced their technical skills, developed interpersonal skills, and experienced valuable lessons in maintaining a balance with their personal lives, school academics, and their jobs. Co-op continues to be an excellent pathway to full-time employment.

Student placement has seen an improvement as the economy slowly recovers. The school is committed to providing students with this invaluable opportunity and intends to work closely with area businesses to expand the program.

STUDENT BODY

Pathfinder's enrollment as of October 1, 2013 totaled 612 students, including the following numbers from member towns: Belchertown 96; Granby 21; Hardwick 24; Monson 83; New Braintree 12; Oakham 10; Palmer 167; Ware 100; and Warren 42. The remaining students were residents of out-of-district communities, the largest number of students coming from Ludlow (29). The 612 figure on October 1st represents a decrease of 47 students overall from the number reported on October 1, 2012. Concern over this decline has led to renewed efforts to design strategies for increasing enrollment and retention.

In order to better meet students' needs and to more effectively accommodate parents, the Special Education and Guidance Department have been combined under a Pupil Personnel Director.

The Pupil Services Office—which also serves as the Admissions Office—once again received far more applications for the 180 ninth grade openings than the school could accommodate. Transfer opportunities into the 10th or 11th grades were also very limited. Consequently, the school experienced another year of waiting lists for each grade.

Parents of students seeking to learn more about Pathfinder or to visit the school had a variety of options available to them throughout the year. In early October guidance counselors were invited to attend a breakfast meeting designed specifically to update them about the admissions policies and procedures. In October and November, Pathfinder's guidance counselors visited the 8th graders in member towns to provide an in-depth presentation about Pathfinder's offerings and the application process. In late November, an evening Open House event was held for 5th-8th graders and their parents. The event featured a free dinner and a tour of the facility, including a visit to technical areas of interest.

In addition to the fall events, each winter 8th graders who are interested are invited to participate in a field trip with their school counselor to visit Pathfinder and get a first-hand look at technical programs, facilities, and to interact with current students. This visit is a great opportunity for the students to experience a typical day at Pathfinder. This year a larger number of students participated in these tours than the previous year. Many attendees acknowledged that they had participated in the summer Youth Enrichment Program, an attractive opportunity for large numbers of enthusiastic prospective students. For students and parents with Internet access, a copy of the application can be downloaded and printed.

The Pathfinder Chapter of the National Technical Honor Society inducted a deserving group of new and existing members in an impressive ceremony. To qualify, students must have a cumulative G.P.A. of 3.5 or above and exhibit the qualities of skill, honesty, service, responsibility, scholarship, citizenship, and leadership. The induction ceremony is held in early spring so that senior inductees can include this recognition on college, scholarship, and work applications. The Chapter continued the practice of inviting as guests underclass students who had a grade point average of 3.0 or higher and who demonstrated potential for induction into the Society.

At the twenty-seventh Annual "Outstanding Vocational-Technical Student" awards dinner sponsored by the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA) and the Massachusetts Vocational Association (MVA), Matthew Stafford, of Hardwick, represented Pathfinder. Matthew, a student in the Machine Technology Program, was ranked at the top of the graduating class with a cumulative GPA of 4.42. He received a myriad of academic and technical awards for excellence and outstanding achievement throughout his high school career. He was a two-year member of the National Technical Honor Society and particularly excelled in mathematics and science, earning a 95 in Calculus and a 96 in Chemistry for the first grading term of his senior year. As a junior, he became employed by Lee Tool Company in Ludlow through Pathfinder's Co-Operative Work Program. Outside of the classroom, Matthew was a devoted athlete; he played left field for Pathfinder's varsity baseball team and in the fall of 2012 he was the quarterback that led the varsity football team to their first-ever undefeated season and Super Bowl Championship. Matthew has been accepted

to Montana Tech in Butte, Montana and is majoring in petroleum engineering.

In June 2013, the graduating class of 153 students received diplomas and technical certificates at commencement exercises. Graduates received 66 awards totaling \$16,988 during the ceremony. An additional \$58,400 in scholarships from schools and colleges was announced during the program. Once again, state and local organizations and businesses, post-secondary institutions, as well as private individuals, continued to recognize the ability and potential of Pathfinder graduates in the form of generous donations. The school committee, administration-- and particularly the graduates-- are grateful for this support and are especially proud of the number of awards that have been made to honor the memory of former Pathfinder students and staff members.

PUPIL SERVICES

Nicole Heroux serves as the Director of Pupil Services. Pupil Services is comprised of both the Special Education and Guidance Departments. The school committee approved this position on a trial bases and agreed to continue to support the change.

Mrs. Heroux and her staff are currently in the process of evaluating all current programs and services in preparation for a Coordinated Review that will occur during the 2014-2015 school year. In this visit, state officials will review both Special Education and Civil Rights. The goal of Pupil Services is to demonstrate its responsibility to provide a continuum of services for all students in accordance with the provisions of state and federal regulations. The Department continues to be committed to finding opportunities to offer different pathways to learning so that the diverse ability levels of the students might be accommodated. Our guidance staff is working on revising our College and Career readiness for our students best interests when it comes to their emotional and educational well-being.

The Special Education Department strives to address the needs of ***all*** learners in grades 9-12. Through continued integrated efforts with students, parents, and other student support services, the Department focuses on promoting each student's self-awareness, ability to self-advocate, and sense of self sufficiency. All students admitted to Pathfinder are expected to fulfill the same requirements to receive a high school diploma as in local town high schools, and all students must have access to all academic and vocational programs. The staff at Pathfinder continues to work to develop an appropriate education for the students who were previously in the MVIP program to insure their success at the school.

Team chairpersons conducted Team evaluations, annual reviews and re-evaluations for over one hundred eighty (180) special needs students. The Pupil Services Department continued to be responsible for approximately fifty (50) students who have 504 Accommodation Plans. Section 504 is a federal civil rights law which requires the provision of reasonable accommodations to students and staff who qualify as disabled under the law.

The Department includes fifteen (15) academic or vocational professionally licensed instructors, 3 guidance counselors, eight (8) paraprofessionals, and three full-time secretaries. Licensed specialists include a Speech and Language Pathologist, a School Adjustment Counselor, an Occupational Therapist, and a full-time School Psychologist.

Work continued on the collaboration between special and general educators.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Students returned to school on January third after their holiday break. A winter semi-formal was scheduled for January 11th and students anxiously looked forward to the get together. Seniors were excited about measuring to order their caps and gowns.

Working together with the Red Cross the school conducted a successful blood drive on January 28th,-- our second of three. Students are always ready to give blood in order to add to the Red Cross blood bank.

Many fundraisers occurred during the winter months. The Gay/Straight Alliance had a bracelet fundraiser sale, a Valentine's Dance was held in February, and a 50/50 raffle was held in order to raise funds for a first ever senior English trip to New York City to see *The Phantom of the Opera*. The Drama club staged a production of *Bonnie and Clyde*, live, in our cafetorium. Class advisors continued to be busy planning for the junior prom and the senior banquet. A fundraiser was conducted to benefit those with Rett Syndrome, where one could buy a paper flower for \$1.00. Called the *Garden of Hope*, paper flowers filled the walls in the math wing, in particular, and brought a breath of spring to the beginning of March.



Senior NYC Field Trip

Plans for the New York trip started as early as November last year for a trip that Pathfinder had never sponsored in the past. Students worked together to plan the trip themselves by finding out school rules pertaining to field trips, obtaining estimates for things like buses and theater tickets, and also making a plan for this enormous undertaking of a day trip. Students successfully raised the \$4,000 cost for the trip themselves by having dances as well as doing a 50/50 raffle and participating in a staff support for a senior initiative. The trip took place on April 24th and, along with the Broadway show, included sightseeing, shopping, and lunch in this great city.

The Pathfinder State Champion Robotics Team moved on to a very successful week at the FIRST World Championship in St. Louis. The trip began with the pilot of the plane announcing on the intercom that the Massachusetts FIRST State Robotics Champions from Pathfinder were on the plane. The entire plane gave a nice round of applause and acknowledged all of our students.

In teams from around the world, the Pathfinder students ultimately won six of their eight matches and were ranked 11th in their division. At times they were paired with teams around the globe, including Russia and China. Given the number of teams that began, **they were ranked in the top 0.7% worldwide!**

Seniors had their Senior Banquet at Ludlow Country Club on May 24th. One hundred forty-two guests attended and danced to the music of DJ Tony Valley. Seniors then celebrated their upcoming graduation with a senior picnic on senior class day. The picnic included a cookout, a mechanical bull and even a bounce house. Seniors had fun at one of their last school get-togethers. A class of one hundred fifty-seven seniors graduated on a very hot June 2, 2013. This year two students—Breann Grenier and Raiche Yaeger—were awarded scholarships of \$1,000 each by Bob's Furniture as a result of the three successful Red Cross blood drives.

Students began school on August 29, 2013. Classes were set and new freshmen entered the school, eager to explore the vocational areas. New class advisors were chosen and the fundraising for class expenses had begun. Just before the holiday break, seniors held the second annual “kiss the fish” fundraiser where a teacher was chosen to kiss the fish

ATHLETICS

Interest and participation in athletics by Pathfinder students remained consistent with approximately 175 students taking part. Co-op programs in wrestling and swimming with Ware and Palmer High Schools continued. Freshman participation this past fall showed a slight increase in our girls’ programs while remaining level among boys.

In 2013, the girls’ varsity basketball team qualified for the Western Mass. Tournament. The varsity girls’ softball team won the Tri-County League title and qualified for both the State Vocational and Western Mass. Tournaments. The varsity baseball team was State Vocational co-champions and qualified for the Western Mass. Tournament.

In softball, Jenna Maska, Stephanie Hastie, and Marissa Riley were selected to the *Republican* first team all-scholastic team. In football, Mike Krzynowek and Ryan Hazzard were named as *Republican* first team all-scholastic players.

Brad Lord and Sarah Sikorski were the outstanding male and female athletes for 2102 – 2013.

GRANTS, DONATIONS AND CONTRACTS

Program Name	Amount
Application	

Title 1	\$116,143	Retain HQ ELA and Math Title 1 Instructor.
Title 1 Carry-Over	\$22,638	Bought Art Supplies for innovative Art Based ELA program, 4 Smart Boards,
Title 2	\$24,709	Collins Writing Trainings; Partial SPED teacher salary.
SPED	\$231,139	Hire 4 aides, Inclusion Model Instructor; Supplies, E-SPED; half salary for on - site School Psychologist.

Perkins	\$97,724	School Wide Skills USA materials and participation costs; Smart Board for HVAC, 3 Auto Simulator trainers; Combination Stove Unit; Welding Table for Auto Body
Amp it UP	\$10,000	2 Machining Training sessions for Palmer and Ware 8 th graders. Brought Pathfinder national attention on the <i>Today Show</i> .
Academic Support	\$19,400	Supported 4 week (48 Contact Hours) Project Based MCAS Math Prep program
WIA Program	\$47,856	Supported 5 weeks @25 hrs. per week summer work for 28 participants 2 Year round part-time jobs.
WIA Bonus Program	\$5,200	Provided quarterly bonuses of \$75-100 for WIA participants meeting Pathfinder criteria (grades, attendance)
WIA Support Services	\$250	Paid for students' Cosmetology licensure.
TOTAL	\$579,912	

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The Summer Youth Enrichment Program included over 110 participants between the ages of 9 and 13. The program ran for three one-week sessions between July 8th and July 26th. Participants had the opportunity to select from the following options: Automotive Technology, Machine Technology, Carpentry, Cosmetology, Environmental Explorers, Photography & Web Design, Young Einstein's Science, Vex Robotics, Bake Shop, and Culinary Arts. The daily schedule placed participants in their specialty areas in the morning with sports, games, or crafts in the afternoon.

Parent and student satisfaction with the Youth Enrichment Programs has been extraordinary. Many students return to the program several times and express regret when they become too old to participate. It serves as an excellent introduction to Pathfinder and its environment.

Pathfinder introduced an online summer school program designed to enable students to make up information missed during the school year and earn credit needed for their promotion or graduation. The academic summer school program was offered during the month of July for four weeks, but was extended to six weeks due to enable students to complete assignments on time. The vocational related courses ran in August, Monday through Friday with two morning sessions, each two hours long. A total of 40 hours in attendance was required for completing the program. Students enrolled in 116 academic courses, 10 in vocational course work. Additionally, 9 students took honors Algebra II. The combined summer school course enrollment was 135 from 11 school districts.

One of the most notable recognitions ever to come to Pathfinder occurred when the Machine Technology Program was featured on the April 28th broadcast of the *Today Show*. Cast from the show spent an entire day filming and interviewing students and staff as part of the Patrick-Murray administration's efforts to showcase job opportunities in manufacturing in Western Massachusetts. The brief segment gave Pathfinder nation-wide exposure and enormous pride!

FACULTY AND STAFF

Currently the Pathfinder staff consists of 45 vocational teachers, 30.5 academic teachers, 1 part-time Athletic Trainer, 10 special education teachers, 3 counselors, a psychologist, a library-media specialist, and 8 paraprofessionals. The school is managed by a group of 8 professional administrators as well as a full-time grants coordinator.

In June, the school said farewell to retirees Steven Alger, Cheryl Sawicki, Roberta Brumer, Gary Lapointe and, in September, Stanley Kapinos.

New Hires included Nicholas Jorge, Technology Director; Catherine Glennon and Kyle Pare (Social Studies); Ryan Rege (Culinary Arts); Edward O'Connor, (Hospitality Management); Mariusz Zielinski (HVAC); Daniela Labbare (Psychologist) and Francis Legassey (Electronics). Former Electronics Instructor Eric Duda was appointed Vocational Director, succeeding Stan Kapinos.

Dr. Paist continued to serve on the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators and on the Board of Directors of the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce. An active member of the Assn. for Career & Technical Education, he is one of two Region I Directors for that organization's National Council of Local Administrators

BUDGET AND FINANCE

The school committee adopted a FY14 budget of \$13,196,923, representing a 2.97% increase over FY13. For the two previous fiscal years of FY12 and FY13, Pathfinder had a budget increase of 1.85% and 2.61% respectively. All nine District member communities subsequently approved their assessments in the spring of 2013. Consequently, the FY14 budget was approved pursuant to the regional school budget statute.

While the Regional School Transportation Reimbursement Rate is still unpredictable, receipts have consistently been in the range of 50% - 60% over the last 2-3 years. A comparable rate of reimbursement is expected to continue for the current year and into FY15.

Additionally, changes in Medicaid reimbursement procedures, the elimination of the MVIP Intensive Needs Program and decreasing enrollment have greatly reduced FY14 Medicaid reimbursement rates. Over the last four years, Pathfinder's reimbursement has decreased precipitously. In 2010, Pathfinder received in excess of \$75,000.00 to subsidize the annual budget; by FY14 the amount had declined to approximately \$14,000.00.

Finally, Chapter 70 Aid from the Commonwealth continues to be a concern for the upcoming FY15 school year. As Pathfinder's enrollment has decreased by nearly 45 students in FY14, Chapter 70 School Aid is expected to be level funded at best for FY15. In addition to the challenges presented by the aforementioned level funded Chapter 70 Aid, capital needs for various vocational shops and the currently proposed roof project may cause reductions in other budgetary areas within the General Fund.

Although budgetary constraints present a number of challenges for FY15, Pathfinder has made strides in cost containment and reduction. Changes in areas such as Health Insurance Plan Design and employee/employer contribution rates should save nearly \$250,000.00 in FY14. Additionally, a new Solar Net Metering Contract is estimated to save approximately \$35,000.00 per year in electricity charges for the next 20 years. Pathfinder is committed to continuously researching new technologies and innovations to minimize overhead costs and maximize student achievement.

The following chart illustrates the FY14 assessments (voted in spring of FY13) to each member community:

ASSESSMENT CALCULATION FY2014:						
	MINIMUM	ADDITIONAL	SHARE OF	2nd YR OF	TRANS-	TOTAL
TOWNS	CONT.	CONT.	REGULAR CAP.	5 YR CAP PLAN	PORTATION	ASSESSMENT
Belchertown	\$ 749,587	\$ 313,883	\$ 3,815	\$ 31,077	\$ 68,733	\$ 1,167,095
Granby	\$ 153,297	\$ 54,714	\$ 665	\$ 12,879	\$ 11,981	\$ 233,536
Hardwick	\$ 178,957	\$ 92,149	\$ 1,120	\$ 4,529	\$ 20,178	\$ 296,934
Monson	\$ 672,075	\$ 279,327	\$ 3,395	\$ 16,127	\$ 61,166	\$ 1,032,090
New Braintree	\$ 91,243	\$ 31,676	\$ 385	\$ 1,864	\$ 6,936	\$ 132,105
Oakham	\$ 74,405	\$ 28,797	\$ 350	\$ 3,386	\$ 6,306	\$ 113,243
Palmer	\$ 1,147,687	\$ 526,978	\$ 6,405	\$ 21,183	\$ 115,395	\$ 1,817,648
Ware	\$ 553,341	\$ 270,688	\$ 3,290	\$ 18,346	\$ 59,274	\$ 904,940
Warren	\$ 256,347	\$ 158,381	\$ 1,925	\$ 9,471	\$ 34,682	\$ 460,806
TOTALS:	\$ 3,876,939	\$ 1,756,594	\$ 21,350	\$ 118,863	\$ 384,650	\$ 6,158,396

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

As Pathfinder enters its forty-first year offering quality vocational education to our member communities, the school committee wishes to reaffirm its pride in the staff and students. They have made substantial contributions to the economic health of our District. The committee recognizes that, in this era of accountability and high expectations, many changes need to be made. The increased emphasis on academic skills needs to be maintained without diminishing the quality of students' technical studies.

Finally, the committee wishes to thank our legislators, town officials and the several town meetings for their support over these years

The committee is mindful of the prediction that FY15 fiscal picture will undoubtedly present another challenge. However—as always-- the goal will be to preserve the quality of education that the students deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael J. Cavanaugh (Palmer), Chairman
Francesco Dell'Olio (Belchertown)
Lorraine F. Alves (Belchertown)
William E. Johnson (Granby)
Julie Quink (Hardwick)
Andrew I. Jaffee (Monson)
Stacie Pride (New Braintree)
Jeffrey Nelson (Oakham)
David Droz (Palmer)
M. Barbara Ray (Ware)
Thomas Rugani (Warren)
Autumn Lopez (Student Representative)

Gerald L. Paist, Superintendent-Director